

3 Nov 69

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U.S. View of Soviet Weapon**Orbital Bombs Seen Ready**

Associated Press

High defense officials believe the Soviet Union probably has started deploying its new space bomb aboard the big SS9 missiles.

Precisely what use is intended for the space bomb—called the “Fractional Orbital Bombardment System”—has never been clear to defense planners but its significance is of some concern.

Defense leaders believe there would be one possible major use for such a weapon—a surprise attack against American strategic bomber bases in a time of crisis.

The question of what the FOBS poses for the United States is expected to arise this

month when U.S. negotiators meet the Soviets at the opening of strategic arms limitation talks.

FOBS, along with a continuing expansion of Soviet ICBMs and missile-launching submarines, prompted Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird to assert before Congress early this year there is no question that the Soviets are seeking a first-strike capability against the United States.

Strategists speak of a first-strike capability as being power enough to hit your opponent with so much force in a surprise attack that he is unable to recover and deal you unacceptable damage in return.

The Soviets first began testing FOBS in late 1966. After 13 shots in that series—the first seven failed but the next half dozen worked—the Soviets waited until last September to try the system again. The latest test series, according to defense leaders, was successful.

“FOBS probably is ready to be deployed now,” one said in an interview.

According to analysts, the Soviets would probably use FOBS to send nuclear warheads over the South Pole towards the United States and avoid most of the detection provided by America’s ballistic missile early warning system.